United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/8

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Society of Iranian Women Advocating Sustainable Development of Environment, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 January 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02168(E)

Please recycle

Bio immunity and public awareness in Iran

Due to human obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy environment as Sustainable Development. The need for public awareness on biosafety of genetically modified products is needed .To days with the initiation and spread of new technologies in the field of biotechnology in the world and the presence of its products in the food basket of the people made us to do awareness on seeds which are genetically modified and there are unknown risks of these products on human health and the environment .Many concerns and challenges concerning methods of production exists in the world. Also due to establishment of Great multinational companies for producing Genetically Modified products. The GMO products are destroying our traditional and organic agriculture.

Its purpose is exclusively the sale of seeds and chemical pesticides in the country That ultimately threaten the country's food sovereignty and food security and livelihood security issues with small poor farmers . When transgenic plants with the slogan of agricultural and environmental problem solutions took basic standing to become one of the greatest subject symbols of questions.

Laboratory studies conducted on the products of the seed which are manipulated indicates its toxicity to animals. Who is betting on child health that genetically modified products are used and the effect is unknown. The team emphasized the need for risk assessment of genetically modified products in their criticism of the lack of attention to the control and prevention of cancer and its management.

According tc the above items and due to promote public awareness in the field of GMO in the Islamic Republic of Iran a project is running to implement the Biosafety Protocol,(the Global KARTAHINA)

Therefor some Iranian NGOs engaged in the research and public awareness in the field of GMO through Advocacy, running workshops with Governmental organizations which associated with these products .Which aims the message of new approach to the lifestyle of citizens based on local culture, access to healthy organic products and the knowledge of the nature of the material from seed to table.

The NGOs have international commitment in the implementation and development of the green economy and the preservation of national resources for future generations.

A total 19 European countries say no to GMO and have decided out of growing genetically modified (GMO) crops within all or part of their territories .the massive anti GMO

Genetically modified products in the Islamic Republic of Iran are under the concern and the concern of the public and non-governmental organizations. NGOs has concerns about the safety of law enforcement in the country

Anew Dilemma for 21 century called Bioterrorism.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/9

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02169(E)

Please recycle

Violation of Fair Trial standards in the case of the Bahraini opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman

On the morning of 28th December 2014, the Bahraini opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman, who heads the largest opposition political association, was arrested by order of the public prosecutor after two days of his re-election as Secretary-General of Wefaq Association after he called for the establishment of a democratic system and government accountability. The public prosecution quickly filed him to the fourth High Criminal Court, which issued its primary ruling incarcerating him for four years on Tuesday, June 16, 2015.

In addition to the pre-trial guarantees, which was absent during the investigation it can be said that the trial of Sheikh Ali Salman does not follow the international standards for fair trail and among the guarantees absent during the trial:

-The right to equality before the law and the courts.
-The right to trial before an independent and impartial court of competent jurisdiction.
-The right to fair consideration of the issues.
-The right to public consideration of the issues.
-The presumption of innocence of the accused.
-The right to trial without undue delay.
-One's right to defend itself or through a lawyer that defends him.
-The right to attend trials and appeal hearings.
-The right to call witnesses and interrogate them.
- The right to equal opportunities of defense.

The following are some facts and events that emphasize the absence of previous guarantees in the trial of Sheikh Ali Salman, whether by the court that issued the first instance judgment or in the Court of appeal:

- Court hearings were held in private, in a procedural violation of a clear decision in the Constitution and the law, and without a decision to this effect, it has prepared a pre-defined list attendees, and those who are not on the list has no right to have access, which makes the sessions in not in public. The family of Sheikh Ali Salman had been deprived of attending the trial, as well as leaders of the opposition Wefaq. Moreover, journalists who are allowed to enter are determined and the court rejected the request of the defense to obtain a copy of the pleading of Public Prosecution, while obtained by some newspapers.
- Some of the defense lawyers are inspected, in a manner contrary to the established procedures in the courts. This behavior would impact on the psychology of the defense and the defense has complained about that behavior more than once.
- The charges in the case are based on what is contained in the letters of His Eminence Sheikh Ali Salman. Parts of these letters are deleted in a way that makes it carry unbearable meanings.
- The court refused, without an acceptable reason, the request made by the defense to call the interior minister, and head of public security, despite the fact that the Interior Minister had directly speak about the case. His statement confirms that the actions had been taken for political reasons represented in the decision of Al-Wefaq Association to boycott elections that took place in November 2014.
- The defense body complained of writing minutes of hearings in a way different to the reality of the hearings of the case, which affects Sheikh Ali Salman's legal position in the case, in some cases. The court's decision includes attaching the correction requests in the file, without being corrected, and when the court is requested to give a copy of the hearings minutes on May 20 2015, the court rejected the request, which is a clear violation of the principles of a fair trial.
- The Court declined in the interrogation hearings of the only attesting witness to directing the vast majority of defense questions, and prevent the defense body to recite the phrases cited by the witness in the record of the investigation, and confronting him with the correct phrases in a way that conceal the truth from appearing, and prevents detection of weakness upon which investigations Minutes is based and impugned by fraud. The court also banned confronting the witness with his speeches, according to the defense; the court has failed to achieve the principle of prima facia evidence of fair trial, which is considered the most important guarantees.
- What happened at the court hearing on May 20, 2015 was shocking, according to the defense. Therefore, the court decided to refuse to offer evidence of defense that denied the charges, represented in the videos that include speeches

that refute the accusations, and reveal maliciousness, and refused to hear any words from Sheikh Ali Salman, and the meeting was adjourned in aggressive manner. The case is reserved for the rule of the session June 16, 2015, without allowing the defense to submit its defense, or their notes and files before the court.

We have found through follow-up of the trial the following:

- The absence of the merits of the detention and judicial harassment, making it arbitrary because it results in the exercise of Political Affairs recognized in international law and the Bahraini legislation.
- The prosecutors and the court violated large number of rights and freedoms guaranteed by international law and the Bahraini law.
- It is clear that the court does not have the administrative and financial independence, which has a direct impact on the independence of the courts and provisions.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/10

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02209(E)

Please recycle

Saudi Arabia has no place among the members of the Human Rights Council after the massacre of mass executions

Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture & The Moroccan Coalition of the Human Rights Bodies wishes you all the best in your tasks.

The Saudi kingdom stresses more suppression and murder on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the collapse of dignity and equality and social justice, and accommodates both horizontally and vertically siege, and applies more prosecutions and trials on human rights activists and journalists and democrats and supporters of freedom of expression. The kingdom descends its grave violations to be like countries hostile to the right to life through the issuance of dozens of executions each year.

Saudi Arabia, at the beginning of the New Year, celebrates the execution of forty seven people and gives the international public opinion death, blood and corpses, claiming the privacy and internal law and death Shari'a (law).
Saudi Arabia today by this unprecedented massacre, committed real genocide fall under the punishment of international law and the Statute of the International Criminal Court, and at the same time this behavior reflects the challenge and contempt for the conscience of humanity and international law of human rights and the values of ethics, which has been and continues to assert that the death penalty is a murder under the umbrella of law and a kind of torture and serious harm to physical integrity and a violation of the sacred right to life.

It is a shame that Saudi Arabia has a seat in the Human Rights Council and sits among its members and to continue this honor till now, which is known to the world as the country of fierce repression and systematic violations of human rights through the sword and the gallows penalty. Moreover, ethics do not allow those who tried the practice of States and their behavior towards the blatant violation of human rights in this Council to commit all its ugliness and arrogance in spite of Justice and right values and despite the charters and covenants, massacre of mass execution and remains away from all the accountability and have the council's membership.

We seek your help, because we believe that the credibility and strength of the Human Rights Council does not only rooted in awareness and humanitarian conscience, but also in the performance of its noble and core mission namely to promote and protect human rights in all parts of the world as planned in the documents of its foundation. These tasks will never be realized if Saudi Arabia and other countries that commit in human rights violations and general oppression of women and freedom of expression and of the press and opinion and the attack of the right to life, death and murder in particular, is a member of the Council, and even monitors the policies of countries in the framework of the universal periodic review, and issue recommendations and seeks to appear as an international actor for the prosperity and development of human rights in the world.

By choosing to apply mass executions on forty seven people, we consider that Saudi Arabia give up on the rules of the Code of Conduct for members and selected bias and stick to privacy instead of commitment to the universality of human rights as established in the same document and in the criteria for membership of the Council.

We call upon you and all advocators for the universal values of human rights, and members of the Council, the expulsion of Saudi Arabia from the membership of the Human Rights Council before the end of the period of its official mandate, to return the prestige of your organization and to keep the value of its existence, meaning and objectives.
It is our right to consider the continuation of Saudi Arabia within the ratio of its members of the Council as an affront to human rights defenders in the world which is not accepted and justified, whatever the reasons.

We call upon the council to assign one of the special rapporteurs or a team work involved in the promotion of human rights in the context of the fight against terrorism or the protection of human rights defenders and freedom of expression and opinion, or those concerned with the abolition of the death penalty to investigate the process of brutal killings and mass death committed by Saudi Arabia on the name of retribution and to submit a report to the General Assembly to take a political sanctions to deter grave violations committed by Saudi Arabia and to examine the ways of demanding

the Security Council to establish a special court to pursue and prosecute those responsible for this criminal act which is considered as a crime against humanity.

Finally, we call upon all national bodies and international human rights organizations concerned with anti-death penalty and the pioneers of thought and freedom and democratic forces around the world to take actions and put pressure on all mass media and at all levels to expel the Saudi Arabia of the Human Rights Council to erase the shame from this UN body and maintain the credibility of the human rights struggle and the nobility of values that sacrifice for her combating death penalty.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/11

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02170(E)

Please recycle

Violations of Ashuraa in Bahrain in 2015

The Bahraini authorities escalated the oppression procedures against the Bahraini Shiites faction, a component of the Bahraini society which commemorates the religious festival of Ashuraa in many regions in 2015. We've monitored, within the period 15 October – 2 November 2015, the following violations: 24 regions are attacked to remove banners relevant to Ashuraa celebration. Banners are either removed, or demolished and sometimes people faced restrictions while trying to hung banners. In 40 cases, the security forces confiscated or demolished the banners, while 7 harassment attempts took place in a trial to hang the banners. In 62 cases, some religious scholars including 6 poets and chanters were summoned. Three people were detained arbitrarily and 12 people were abused. The reason for most of the summons was to pose restrictions on the sermons. The security authorities posed restrictions on the administrations of mosques and 20 people were summoned. There are 169 cases where the Bahraini authorities breached the freedom of religion or belief. The result of oppressing the peaceful protests, which condemn the Bahraini authorities' violations of Ashuraa rituals, was the injury of 45 persons due to the use of the internationally-prohibited bullets and gas bombs in four Bahraini regions.

The Bahraini authorities manipulated the media statements of the Gaafari Endowment Administration, the Northern Municipality, and the Ministry of Interior to mislead the international opinion about the reality of the religious oppression encountered by the Shiites in Bahrain. In addition, the National Institution of Human Rights failed to show a stance against the violations of the freedom of religion within this period.

We recommend the following:

1- Allowing the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit Bahrain to conduct an investigation on the reasons of religious oppression and advise the Bahraini government to solve the problem of persecuting the Shiites citizens.

2- The UN contribution in assisting Bahrain to develop practical plans and legal procedures to terminate the persecution of the Shiites by sending an ad hoc group which is concerned with helping the countries that are suffering from discrimination and persecution against national, religious, and ethnic groups.

3- Allowing the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful gatherings Mayna Kyay to visit Bahrain to help the government to eliminate the violation of the right to peaceful gatherings for religious purposes, which is ensured by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and to assist in eliminating banning the peaceful social and political gatherings, a phenomenon which appeared a year ago.

4- Stopping the manipulation of laws to restrict the rights that are internationally ensured.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/12

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02171(E)

Please recycle

Stop Torture and Violation in Bahrain

Khiam Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture would like to kindly draw your attention to the latest developments in Bahrain's human rights situation and to update you on the pertinent issues, specifically the infringement on freedoms of opinion, assembly, and beliefs, the right of human rights and political activists, systematic torture practices, and the issues of death penalties and stripping of nationality.

The joint statement your country signed on Bahrain in June 2015 specifically mentioned many of these issues, yet there have been no significant advances towards resolving the issues. The human rights situation has largely regressed with widespread clampdown on human rights defenders, journalists, and activists, including members of the opposition, like the imprisonment of Sheikh Ali Salman (Wefaq's Secretary General), Ebrahim Sharif (former Wa'ad SG) and Majid Milad (former Manama Municipality Council Chairman and member of Wefaq's General Secretariat). Activists like Nabeel Rajab have been barred from travelling abroad despite medical requirements, whilst family members of Bahrainis that died in custody, like AbdulkarimFakhrawi's nephews, have been unlawfully targeted and detained.

The judiciary has been an obstacle to improvements, with judges appointed by the ruling family issuing obscure and ungrounded judgments and sentences. This has caused other violations to flow, especially against the Jaw prisoners, who have additionally been handed 15-years sentences for involvement in the prison protests.

Primarily, the Bahraini Government has largely failed to implement the accepted recommendations posed by the Bahrain Independent Commission Inquiry (BICI) (published in November 2011). Some cosmetic improvements have been carried out, but the human rights violations are largely at the level it was at 2011 – with deteriorations occurring in many other aspects.

Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on Peaceful Assembly has yet to be granted admission to Bahrain since 2011. The opposition's demands to peacefully assemble have continuously been ignored with the authorities opting to unnecessary violent interventions. Similarly, the Bahraini authorities have prohibited the Special Rapporteur on Torture from carrying out his mandated obligations by barring visits since 2011, while the practices of torture in prisons and detention centres continues.

With the increasing severity of the violations since the BICI report, we urge you to nominate a Special Rapporteur to Bahrain due to the deliberate noncompliance with international obligations and agreements as well as the non-adherence to international processes. We ask you to significantly pressure the Bahraini authorities to ensure the BICI and UPR recommendations are expeditiously implemented, and to push for the following:

1- We urge you to pressure the Bahraini Government to grant the entrance of the Special Rapporteurs on Peaceful Assembly and Torture, so that they may carry out their mandated obligations. In addition, allow independent human rights organisations representatives to enter the country unhindered to examine the human rights situation and provide redress to victims.

2- Drive for the release of all prisoners of conscience, with prominent political and human rights figures at the forefront, without reprisals or obligations.

3- Push the Bahraini authorities to reconsider the death penalty sentences handed out post-2011 Bahraini uprising, as there is significant evidence and indications that demonstrate they are politically motivated and flawed.

4- Urge the Bahraini authorities to cease all politically motivated trials and drop all charges against peaceful activists, to establish a positive environment that allows for meaningful dialogue between the opposition and the Bahraini Government.

5- Create a protective environment to safeguard human rights defenders active in Bahrain, activists, and non-government organizations.

6- Urge the UN Human Rights Council and involved bodies to prevent countries like Bahrain, which lack justice and fairness in the judicial system and have a history of trial manipulation, from issuing and carrying out death penalties, specifically against political and human rights activists.

7- We also implore you to call for the establishment of a UN commissioned fact-finding committee to investigate the reported violations.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/13

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 5
Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Written statement* submitted by Reporters Sans Frontiers International — Reporters Without Borders International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

CONCRETE PROPOSAL TO IMPROVE JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

Various UN bodies have adopted resolutions in the past decade – including Security Council Resolutions 2222 adopted in 2015 and 1738 in 2006, and General Assembly Resolutions 68/163, 69/185, 70/162 - with the aim of protecting journalists and combating impunity for those responsible for violence against journalists.

The Human Rights Council itself has been dealing with the issue for the past few years, held panels and adopted several resolutions among which HRC/RES/21/12 which states specifically in Article 11 that it

> *Stresses the need to ensure better cooperation and coordination at the international level with regard to ensuring the safety of journalists, including with regional organizations, and invites United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, other international and regional organizations, Member States and all relevant stakeholders, when applicable and in the scope of their mandates, to cooperate further in the implementation of the United NationsPlan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, elaborated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination;*

The following year, in June 2014, during a UN Human Rights Council panel on the safety of journalists mandated by the same resolution, Getachew Engida, UNESCO's deputy director, Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE's representative for media freedom, and Frank La Rue, the then UN Human Rights Council special rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, all agreed that governments had failed to respect their obligations.

The following year, in August 2015, the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his annual report on the safety of journalists, on the issue of impunity, doesn't hesitate to also speak of failure: *"I am deeply concerned about the failure to reduce the frequency and scale of targeted violence that journalists face and the near absolute impunity for such crimes,"* adding *"the international legal framework for the protection of journalists and media workers is in place,"* but *"the major challenge remains to ensure compliance with this framework."*

Numbers speak

If we are to judge by the number of journalists killed each year, neither the urgency of the situation nor the progress made at the legal level have been reflected in the reality on the ground.

According to *Reporters Without Borders*, 787 journalists and media personnel have been killed in the exercise of their profession over the last 10 years. In the year 2015 alone, there were, world-wide, 67 deaths of newsproviders while doing their job. In conflict zones, such as Syria where 55 professional journalists were killed since the beginning of the civil war in 2011, journalists were deliberately targeted, murdered, and executed in public.

In areas not afflicted by armed conflict, in situations considered peaceful, journalists also face increasing violence. In 2015, two thirds of the journalists killed were tallied in situations that were not defined as "armed conflict". Peaceful assembly, demonstrations in the course of social conflicts are notoriously dangerous for journalists who are generally among the first targets of the police or even sometimes protesters.

While digital technology offers effective new ways to spread propaganda with impunity, journalists lack a safe and enabling environment to provide the information needed to not only combat organized crime and violent extremism, but to also help in their prevention.

Without truly effective protection of newsproviders, the people's right to know and the right to impart information enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights cannot be guaranteed

Reporters Without Borders urges the Human Rights Council to join all other relevant stakeholders in recommending that the Secretary General appoint a Special Representative for the safety of journalists (SRSJ).

Precedent

Such a mechanism already exists on the issue of Children in Armed conflicts and has proven its efficacy.

The Special *Representative of the UN Secretary General on Children in Armed Conflicts* was established in 1997 with the mandate to report to the then Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly - and since 1999 to the Security Council. UNICEF, UNHCR and OHCHR were asked to support the new mandate.

Since 1997, the Special Representative has promoted world-wide awareness on the gravity of the situation of children in armed conflicts and made possible the implementation of concrete actions such as the adoption of a series of UNSC resolutions on themes specific to this issue, and the formulation of a protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UNGA in 2000 which today has been ratified today by 156 States. Furthermore, the Special Representative has been able to actively promote the adoption and effective implementation of national legislations.

What *a* Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on the Safety of Journalists could do

A *Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on the safety of journalists* (SRSJ) with a central and permanent position under the UN Secretary General (UNSG) aegis would significantly strengthen and give more coherence to all the efforts of the relevant UN agencies, organs and programmes working on this issue, in particular to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Human Rights Council and all its mechanisms, The Human Rights Committee, UNESCO, as well as regional and national bodies.

Following are suggested coordination and monitoring functions which could be included, among others, in such a mandate.
these are called for in the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity* and contained in HRC/RES/21/12

- **Collecting information** on threats to the safety of media professionals specifically reported within the UN system.

- **Serving as a systematic and rapid alert mechanism** for the most serious violations affecting newsproviders, in both conflicts and non-conflict situations.

- **Liaising with the Security Council** (UNSC) to facilitate a rapid use of all the tools at the UNSC's disposal.

- **Coordinating the monitoring activities of relevant agencies** at international, regional and national levels.

- **Complementing the work of the Human Rights Committee** with a more specific mandate focused on the safety of journalists.

- **Facilitating the development of harmonized strategies** among all international organs, funds and programs.

- **Encouraging the establishment of a coordinated network of regional focal points** on the safety of journalists.

It is essential to ensure that journalists, media associations and other relevant civil society actors, be included in any future discussions dealing with this issue and *Reporters Without Borders* stands ready to collaborate.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/14

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Child Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[01 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02214(E)

Please recycle

Children in Armed Conflict

Today, grave violations are committed against children and youth in the war-affected countries of the world. Young girls and boys are killed, maimed, orphaned, abducted, deprived of education and health care, sexually violated and left with deep emotional and physical scars. These children and youth are uniquely and especially vulnerable to recruitment and hundreds of thousands are associated with State and non-State armed groups.

Children's participation in armed conflicts has serious implications for the physical and emotional well-being of them and their societies. The increase of civilian casualties, including children and youth, in contemporary armed conflicts is a reflection of the changing nature of conflict, in which we see the increased use of improvised explosive devices and new technologies, the conduct of hostilities increasingly in urban or densely populated civilian areas, and a blurring of the distinction between civilians and combatants. In some situations, children and youth are also used as suicide bombers and schools are systematically attacked jeopardizing the life of children and preventing them from going to school.

Children and youth also suffer from other consequences of conflict such as poverty, unemployment, poor governance and the disintegration of families and communities. Rehabilitation and reintegration is particularly critical for children and youth formerly associated with armed groups in order to break cycles of violence and to find a new existence after a life of conflict and distress. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs play a critical and vital role in this context.

During armed conflict, young girls are subject to specifically widespread and, at times, systematic forms of human rights violations that have mental, emotional, spiritual, physical and material repercussions. These violations include illegal detention with or without family members, abduction and forced removal from families and homes, disappearances, torture and other inhuman treatment, amputation and mutilation, forced recruitment into fighting forces and groups, slavery, sexual exploitation, increased exposure to HIV/AIDS, and a wide range of physical and sexual violations, including rape, enforced pregnancy, forced prostitution, forced marriage and forced child-bearing. There is urgent need for better documentation, monitoring and reporting on the extreme suffering that armed conflict inflicts on girls, as well as on the many roles girls play during conflict and its aftermath. Such information and response mechanisms are needed for the purpose of strengthening and developing policy and programs to prevent and or address these grave rights violations.

Our region, the Middle East, has over many years been wracked by political violence and armed conflicts in which governments and armed groups alike have shown a pernicious disregard for the lives of civilians. Many governments and non-state actors in this region violate the core principle of international humanitarian law-civilian immunity-which requires a warring party to distinguish between the civilian population and military targets, and to direct attacks only against military targets. And, unfortunately, children are the main victims of such violence.

Some non-state armed groups in Syria have used children as young as 15 to fight in battles and in support roles. Extremist Islamist groups including the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), Free Syrian Army, the Islamic Front coalition, and Jabhat al-Nusra, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, have specifically recruited children --in some cases, through free schooling campaigns that include weapons training, and have given them dangerous tasks, including suicide bombing missions[1]

Numerous factors influence the recruitment of young children into conflicts. Children are most vulnerable in areas where conflicts have raged over a long period of time. If children are born into and raised in a conflict zone, they are more likely to be de-sensitized to violence. They are also less likely to have been exposed to opportunities, such as education or jobs.

[1]. http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/06/22/maybe-we-live-and-maybe-we-die

Besides forced recruitment, many children volunteer to fight as they have few other options for a livelihood outside of an armed organization. The military or militia is seen as a 'meal ticket' and a place for safety and security. Children are also easier to convince and control, and often require little or no payment, making them targets for terror groups and militias.
In this environment, protecting the security and the basic rights of children in armed conflicts requires political and economic action, as well as humanitarian assistance. We urge the international community to use all the possible tools to stifle the resources and arms available to all armed groups, state and non-state, that violates the security and rights of children. Also, we urge all the Member States to adopt legislative measures to discourage corporate actors within their jurisdiction from engaging in commercial activities that support parties that engage in violations of the rights of children.

We believe that specific provisions for child protection, including the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, should be spelled out as a core element of all peacekeeping mandates and explicit provisions in all UN-supported peace agreements. Peacekeeping forces should receive training in child protection, and child protection advisors should be provided with a strong, clear mandate. As much as possible, crimes against children, including recruitment of child soldiers, should be excluded from amnesty agreements and youth themselves should be involved in efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation.

More specifically, we urge all the members of the international community to provide education as soon as possible and make it the fourth pillar of humanitarian assistance; work to prevent recruitment by providing alternatives, especially for adolescents and other particularly susceptible groups; increase targeted support to adolescents, whose needs are distinct and too often overlooked among children; recognize the special rights of young girls; include humanitarian exemptions for children in all sanctions and frequently monitor their impact; train all personnel deployed in times of crisis to respect and promote the rights of children; and cooperate with the international, regional and sub-regional organizations to protect children.

And finally, one option remains most urgently in front of society: Children already recruited into violent conflicts can be rescued and re-integrated into society. The international community does not need to wait for conflicts to end for children to be removed from armed organizations.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/15

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 7
Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Written statement* submitted by the Child Foundation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[02 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02215(E)

Please recycle

The Situation of Palestinian Children

Palestinians represent the world's largest refugee population and one of its longest standing. Military conflict and political turmoil stemming from the Arab-Israeli dispute have forced millions of Palestinians to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, many more than once. But before speaking of the rights of Palestinian children under the occupation, we must recognize the fact that the occupation itself is an unethical, illegal, inhumane and unjustified act that denies a whole nation its right to self-determination, which is a basic right of all nations.

Sadly, prospects of a just and lasting resolution of the conflict are not yet in sight. The socioeconomic hardship, in which the Palestinian people have been living, whether it is in The Occupied Palestinian Territory itself or in the neighboring countries of Jordan, Syria or Lebanon, is therefore likely to continue to be a serious challenge for the new generation in the foreseeable future. The lives of Palestinian children in the West Bank - including East Jerusalem - and the Gaza Strip have been heavily affected by the presence of Israeli occupation forces, settlers and checkpoints since the 6-day war of 1967 between Israel and Arab States.

A 2007 survey showed that 17 percent of the Palestinian population is made up of children under the age of five, and 46 percent under 15. In 2012, it was estimated that the densely populated Gaza Strip has a population of 1.7 million, over 800,000 of whom are children. Many of these children witness explosions, house demolitions, waves of arrests, the constant presence of militia and civil violence and the horrific injury or killing of friends and family members. They are often subject to curfews and afraid just to play in the street and be children. In conflict situations little time and support is available for children to mourn their losses or to gain an understanding of the situation. A study conducted by SOS Children found that a high percentage of children in Palestine show highly pronounced symptoms of psychological strain, and that around 60% of these children required urgent psychological help.

In 2012, Breaking the Silence, an organization founded by former Israeli soldiers whose purpose is to expose alleged abuses committed by the Israeli Defense Forces released a booklet of witness reports written by more than 30 former Israeli soldiers. These reports document of Palestinian children being beaten, intimidated, humiliated, verbally abused and injured by Israeli soldiers.

According to many reports, Palestinian children are often arrested at night, handcuffed, blindfolded, abused and not given access to family members or legal representation. Some of these children are locked in solitary confinement for days or even weeks and sometimes sign confessions that they later say were coerced. In the decade to 2013, according to a March 2013 report by the United Nations Children's Fund ("UNICEF"), Israel has arrested some 7,000 Palestinian children; 18 of 27 arrested in Hebron in March 2013 were below the age of 12. This report stated that the Palestinian children who are detained by the Israeli military are subjected to "widespread, systematic and institutionalized" ill treatment in violation of international law. UNICEF estimated that in the West Bank IDF and Israeli security services annually arrest around 700 youths between 12 and 17 years old, often from their homes at night.

In the physical and mental health areas, some studies have found that about 10 percent of Gaza children under five have stunted growth due to malnutrition and that 68 percent of pre-school children and 58 percent of children of school age suffer from anemia. Also the long blockade of Gaza Strip, which has prevented importation of necessary supplies and materials, as well as Israel's Gaza War bombing of infrastructure, has led to water being severely contaminated by fertilizer and human waste. Diseases like typhoid and diarrhea, spread by contaminated water, have doubled in children under the age of 3, which has long-term health implications. While, according to some reports, more than 370,000 Palestinian children have been left shell-shocked by 2014 Israeli war on Gaza, researchers say that the average rate of post-traumatic stress disorder among children from both sides of the Green Line is about 70 per cent.

The vulnerability of Palestinian children and youth is more acute than ever before. Palestine refugee children are exposed to considerable child protection concerns including physical and emotional violence, sexual abuse, child marriage, detention, child labor and the effects of armed conflict. Poverty, stifled employment opportunities and overcrowded living conditions in refugee camps are just some of the elements that exacerbate child protection concerns for Palestine refugee children.

Throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, the situation of human rights of children remains dire. The policies of land confiscation, expansion of settlements, home demolitions and forced displacement of families, revocation of residency permits and restrictions on freedom of movement continue to have a greater impact on children. Children are

particularly vulnerable to settlers' violent attacks and harassment. In Gaza, the continued Israeli blockade has significantly affected the right of children to food, health and education and psychological trauma from the Israeli attack on Gaza continues to affect children more disproportionately.

The Palestinian children live lives unlike those of other children in the world. Their childhood is distorted by a long and brutal occupation that kills their innocence and their dreams. They are living in constant fear and anxicty and they are forced to be grown-ups, when they're still children.

We firmly believe that Palestinian children have a right to be protected against all acts of violence in the midst of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the right to a safe shelter, safe access to their schools and to the health services. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines children's right to have a voice, particularly in matters that concern them. Ensuring that children and youth are not ignored and have the space to define their own lives are incredibly powerful ways to promote protection. And this voice and vision transcend political agendas, silencing the senseless violence and destruction.

United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/16

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 5
Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Written statement* submitted by the Friends World Committee for Consultation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[02 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02216(E)

Please recycle

Rights of Children of Incarcerated Minority Parents

Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) welcomes the increasing attention paid to the issues faced by minority groups in criminal justice systems, highlighted by the report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsak, on minorities and the criminal justice system.[1]

The report of the Special Rapporteur acknowledges a global pattern of violations of the rights of minority groups in criminal justice processes.[2] This echoes the UN Secretary-General's guidance note on racial discrimination and protection of minorities, which notes that systemic discriminatory practices against minority groups are frequently reported.[3]

FWCC (Quakers) recognise the importance of the eighth session of the Forum on Minority Issues in November 2015, on the topic of minorities in the criminal justice system, and the draft recommendations of the Forum in seeking to address these issues.[4]

FWCC (Quakers) would like to draw particular attention to the impact of this discriminatory treatment on the rights of the child, in particular those affected by parental incarceration. The children of members of minority groups are not only more likely to experience parental incarceration, but may be subject to additional adverse effects beyond those generally faced by the children of incarcerated parents.

Children of incarcerated parents and minorities in criminal justice systems

The report of the Special Rapporteur cites higher rates of criminalization of minority groups in many criminal justice systems, including their over-representation in pre-trial detention. Possible reasons for this include: the disproportionate representation of minority groups among poorer socio-economic groups where patterns of offending may be higher in respect of certain crimes; particular discriminatory provisions in criminal law; police profiling practices; and disproportionate targeting of minority communities leading to higher rates of arrest.[5]

The report also refers to disparities seen at the sentencing stage: members of minority groups are more likely to be given prison sentences rather than conditional releases; more likely to be sentenced to longer terms of imprisonment, or life imprisonment without parole; and are more likely to be sentenced to death. These disparities may be due to intentional prejudice and/or indirect discrimination against minority groups in judicial proceedings.[6]

Due to this increased criminalization across various stages of the criminal justice system, the children of members of minority groups face a greater likelihood of experiencing parental incarceration. However, without the proper recording of data on the children of incarcerated parents, disaggregated by minority grouping, States are unable to assess the extent of this impact, or to ensure the rights of these children are upheld and their well-being protected.

Impacts of parental incarceration

[1] Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsak, to the seventieth session of the General Assembly on minorities and the criminal justice system, A/70/212 of 30 July 2015.
[2] Supra at note 1, para. 7.
[3] Guidance note of the Secretary-General on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, November 2014, available online at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Minorities/GuidanceNoteSG.pdf.
[4] Forum on Minority Issues, Draft recommendations on minorities in the criminal justice system, A/HRC/FMI/2015/2 of 9 September 2015.
[5] Supra at note 1, para. 29.
[6] Supra at note 1, para. 53.

While the need for attention to be paid to the rights of children affected by parental incarceration has been directly acknowledged by many international human rights bodies and instruments,[7] criminal justice systems have often failed to recognise these children as individual rights holders.

Parental incarceration may impact directly upon each individual child in different ways. Among many recorded adverse effects, the incarceration of a parent, or parents, risks damaging parental and family relationships for affected children, potentially leading to emotional harm or relationship breakdown, and can negatively affect children's mental and physical health.[8]

Minorities in detention facilities

The report of the Special Rapporteur notes that while incarcerated, or in pre-trial detention, members of minority groups may experience further discriminatory treatment. This discrimination can take direct forms, where members of minority groups are subject to poorer conditions or treatment than other groups, or indirect forms, for example where authorities fail to adequately respect the particular needs of minority groups, such as in accommodating religious and cultural practices, providing language interpretation, or in the supporting the maintenance of relations with families.[9]

This additional discriminatory treatment, especially with regard to maintenance of relations with families, can further exacerbate negative impacts on the children of incarcerated parents. The ability to maintain a good parental relationship despite parental incarceration, where this is in the best interests of the child, has been found to help towards mitigating some of the negative emotional and psychological impacts for affected children.[10] For children of incarcerated parents not living in prison full-time, this relationship has to be maintained through intermittent in-person contact and indirect contact.

Children residing in prison with a parent

In many countries, children up to a certain age may reside in prison with a parent. In these instances, minority children residing in prison with a parent may be subject to discriminatory treatment due to their or their parents' minority group status.

Incarcerated members of minority groups and their children may also face restrictions in accessing specific services, such as mother and baby units and healthcare services, for example where these services are not made available in appropriate minority languages, or where facilities are not made culturally appropriate.

Judicial proceedings and sentencing

In order to uphold the rights and dignity of affected children, the best interests of the child should be taken into account as a primary consideration in all decision-making processes, including prosecutorial decision-making and at the time of sentencing.[11] Mandatory minimum sentences, which can be disproportionately applied to minority groups, prevent the consideration of the best interests of the child at the point of sentencing.[12]

---

[7] For references from relevant bodies see Quaker United Nations Office (2015) *Briefing Paper on International Standards and Guidance on Children of Incarcerated Parents*, available online at: http://quno.org/resource/2015/4/children-incarcerated-parents-international-standards-and-guidance.

[8] Jones, A, et al. (2013) *Children of Prisoners: Interventions and mitigations to strengthen mental health*, University of Huddersfield: Huddersfield, p47.

[9] Supra at note 1, para. 54.

[10] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Report and recommendations of the Day of General Discussion on 'Children of incarcerated parents' of 30 September 2011, para. 37, available online at: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion/2011CRCDGDReport.pdf.

[11] For references to the best interests of the child, see supra at note 7, p3-5.

[12] Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General recommendation XXXI on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system, A/60/18 of 3 October 2015, pp.98-108, para. 35.

The report of the Special Rapporteur notes the importance of the appropriate recognition, respect and accommodation of individuals' cultural backgrounds throughout criminal proceedings.[13] Linguistic minorities,[14] foreign nationals and stateless persons[15] and their children may also experience particular difficulties and face additional risks in the course of judicial proceedings.

Arrest protocol

Minority groups often face disproportionate rates of arrest.[16] Where the impacts of arrest are not considered, the arrest of a parent, and particularly the violent arrest and/or arrest without explanation, tends to have a seriously adverse effect on the children.[17] In addition, the report of the Special Rapporteur recommends that police should be trained to understand the social context, cultural practices and values of minority communities.[18]

Alienation from the state

The report of the Special Rapporteur acknowledges that members of minority groups may view justice systems as 'alien' and to be avoided,[19] particularly where discrimination and oppression exists within such systems.[20] Negative experiences with criminal justice processes around parental incarceration may engender an even greater sense of alienation from the State, and so constitute a barrier to accessing justice in future.

The death penalty

The report of the Special Rapporteur cites findings that those sentenced to death come disproportionately from minority backgrounds.[21] This disparity in the imposition of the death penalty mean that the children of members of minority groups are more likely to experience the death sentence of execution of a parent.

The imposition of the death penalty has multiple negative impacts on the children of those sentenced to death or executed, which are often not taken into account at sentencing. Among other negative impacts, the execution of a parent permanently severs the parental relationship, and has been found to cause specific additional traumas for affected children.[22]

Recommendations

FWCC (Quakers) call on States to fully implement the final recommendations of the eighth session of the Forum on Minority Issues.

We also recommend that States implement the following measures in order to ensure the protection of the rights of the children of members of minority groups in criminal justice processes:

- States should ensure that data is collected by criminal justice agencies to record the number of prisoners with children and the number of children of each incarcerated parent. This should be disaggregated by minority grouping in order to allow for planning of policy and practice, including services for specific minority groups, if needed

[13] Supra at note 1, para. 37.
[14] Supra at note 1, para. 31.
[15] Supra at note 12, para. 4(b).
[16] Supra at note 1, para. 29.
[17] Phillips, S. D., and Zhao, J. (2010) 'The relationship between witnessing arrests and elevated symptoms of post-traumatic stress', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32:10, pp. 1246-1254.
[18] Supra at note 1, para. 24.
[19] Supra at note 1, para. 66.
[20] Supra at note 1, para. 32.
[21] Supra at note 1, para. 53.
[22] Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, para. 309.81, referred to in Beck, E., Britto, S., and Andrews, A. (2007) *In the Shadow of Death: Restorative Justice and Death Row Families*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, p125; Long, W., (2011) 'Trauma therapy for death row families' in Journal of Trauma and Dissociation, 12, pp. 482-494.

- States should ensure that the best interests of the child are taken into account as a primary consideration in all prosecutorial and sentencing decisions regarding their parents, including through provision of legal assistance
- States should develop proactive measures to protect and promote the rights of children of minority groups with incarcerated parents, in order to address their specific needs, through consultation with affected minority communities[23]
- States should ensure that, where it is in the best interests of the child, children are able to maintain a relationship with their incarcerated parent or parents, including through ensuring rights to visiting and contact, and are not impeded in maintaining such relationships due to discrimination
- States should ensure that conditions of detention or imprisonment, and the relevant staff, should reasonably accommodate the cultural, dietary, religious and linguistic characteristics of minority prisoners[24]
- Pending abolition of the death penalty, States should ensure that the rights of children of parents sentenced to death are upheld, for example by ensuring that language is not a barrier to their access to information.

For further information on the above issues, please refer to our briefing paper, *Children of Incarcerated Parents: Minorities in Criminal Justice Systems.*[25]

---

[23] Supra at note 1, para. 56.
[24] Supra at note 4, para. 35; Supra at note 1, para. 100.
[25] Cullen, D. (2015) *Children of Incarcerated Parents: Minorities in Criminal Justice Systems,* available online at: http://quno.org/resource/2015/11/children-incarcerated-parents-and-minorities-criminal-justice-systems.